

LESSON 4

In medias res.

In the middle (the thick) of things. —HORACE

Key Words

extraneous
extraterrestrial
extravert

mediate
mediocrity
medium
non sequitur

obsequious
sequester
subsequent

Familiar Words

extracurricular
extramural
extraordinary
extrasensory
extravagant
extravaganza

Challenge Words

extragalactic
extrajudicial
extramarital
extraterritorial

EXTRA <L. "on the outside"

1. **extraneous** (ĕk strā'nē əs)

adj. 1. Coming from outside; foreign.

To study a virus, laboratory technicians must remove all **extraneous** matter.

2. Not essential or vital.

Our history teacher said, "Keep to the subject; no **extraneous** details, please."

2. **extraterrestrial** (ĕk strə tər əs'trē əl) [*terra* <L. "earth"]

adj. Outside or originating outside the limits of the earth's atmosphere.

According to some scientists, the impact of an **extraterrestrial** object, such as a comet, caused conditions that led to the extinction of dinosaurs.



3. **extravert** (ĕks'trə vûrt) Also **extrovert**. [*vertere* <L. "to turn"] *n.* A person chiefly interested in things outside the self, directing thoughts outward rather than inward.

Some **extraverts** express their social ease with facile talk and colorful clothing.

extraverted, *adj.*

Antonym: **introvert**

Familiar Words

immediate
intermediate
medieval
Mediterranean

Challenge Words

medial
mizzen
moiety
mullion

MEDIUS <L. "middle"

4. **mediate** (mē'dē āt')
tr. v. To act as negotiator between opposing sides in a dispute.

During his presidency Jimmy Carter **mediated** disagreements between Israel and Egypt.

mediation, *n.*; **mediator**, *n.*

5. **mediocrity** (mē'dē ōk'rə tē)
n. The condition of being commonplace or ordinary, somewhere in the middle between high and low; a very ordinary person.

Although twice elected prime minister of Great Britain, Sir Winston Churchill was considered an academic **mediocrity** as a schoolboy.

mediocre, *adj.*

6. **medium** (mē'dē əm; plural **media**: mē'dē ə)
n. 1. A substance or element through which something is transmitted.

For the Watusi, an African tribe, cattle are wealth and therefore become a **medium** of exchange.

2. A person thought to have communication with spirits of the dead.

Despite her implied powers as a **medium**, Madam Arcati cannot control the ghost of a first wife who complicates the lives of her successor and her helpless husband in the play *Blithe Spirit*.

NOTA BENE: Of course, *medium* also means "a condition halfway between extremes" (*n.*): Orange is the *medium* between yellow and red; (*adj.*): We sought a house in a *medium* price range.

**Familiar Words**

consequence
execute
persecute
prosecute
pursue
sect
sequel
sue
suitor

SEQUOR, SEQUI, SECUTUM <L. "to follow"

7. **non sequitur** (nŏn sĕk'wī tŏor')
[*non sequitur* <L. "it does not follow"]
n. A statement that does not follow logically from evidence.

"A person who cries must be sad" is a **non sequitur** because there are other reasons for tears than feeling sad: laughing uncontrollably and peeling onions, for example.

Challenge Words

ensue
inconsequential
sequester

NOTA BENE: A deliberate non sequitur can be a comic device, as humorist Robert Benchley illustrates:

"Is life too easy for the youth of today? Are we raising a generation of pampered dawdlers? What is that on your necktie?"

8. **obsequious** (əb sē'kwē əs) [*ob* <L. "to"]
adj. Excessively willing to yield to others.

The powerful Japanese military dictators known as shōguns expected their followers to be **obsequious**.

obsequiously, *adv.*; **obsequiousness**, *n.*

9. **subsequent** (süb'sə kwənt) [*sub* <L. "under"]
adj. Coming after or later.

After the volcano erupted, geologists carefully monitored **subsequent** rumblings.

subsequently, *adv.*

10. **sequester** (sə kwēs'tər)
tr. v. 1. To go into hiding; to seek solitude.

Bears **sequester** themselves during the months of hibernation, sleeping through the winter.

2. To isolate.

Fearful of invasion during World War II, the U.S. government hastily **sequestered** American citizens of Japanese ancestry behind barbed wire in internment camps, an action now severely criticized.

sequestered, *adj.*; **sequestration**, *n.*

EXERCISE 4A

Circle the letter of the best SYNONYM (the word or phrase most nearly the same as the word in bold-faced type).

1. **obsequious** admirers a. annoying b. bossy c. too subservient
d. mimicking e. pretentious
2. **mediation** of a conflict a. stimulation b. definition
c. observation d. circumvention e. solution
3. a series of **mediocre** jobs a. low-paying b. outstanding
c. central d. undemanding e. ordinary

Circle the letter of the best ANTONYM (the word or phrase most nearly opposite the word(s) in bold-faced type).

4. **subsequent** events a. preceding b. revealed c. hidden
d. following e. recurring

5. famous for **non sequiturs** a. brilliant expositions b. illogical utterances c. artful connections d. cruel impositions e. extraverted remarks
6. **extraterrestrial** visitors a. earthdwelling b. ghostly c. unwelcome d. heavenly e. perverse
7. **extraneous** bits in the cereal a. extra b. essential c. minute d. foreign e. indigestible

EXERCISE 4B

Circle the letter of the sentence in which the word in bold-faced type is used incorrectly.

1. a. French is the **extraneous** language that I study in school.
b. The soprano added **extraneous** flourishes to her aria.
c. We stretched the stew to feed **extraneous** guests.
d. Smart mountain climbers put nothing **extraneous** in their backpacks.
2. a. Sea turtles **sequester** their eggs in sand, laboriously digging out a nest and keeping watch until the nestlings crack their shells and creep to the sea.
b. Amish folk **sequester** themselves from influences they consider corrupting, such as automobiles and television.
c. Crowds **sequestering** at Coney Island on hot summer days stroll along the boardwalk and swim in the Atlantic Ocean.
d. Convents are places of **sequestration** so that women with a religious vocation can devote their energies to contemplation.
3. a. The movie *E.T.* shows the development of friendship between a human family and an **extraterrestrial** being.
b. Although the pole quivered, it did not fall as a high jumper set a new record with an **extraterrestrial** leap of eight feet.
c. In 1938 a radio production of Orson Welles's *War of the Worlds* sounded so real that many listeners believed an **extraterrestrial** invasion was occurring.
d. The first woman to experience **extraterrestrial** flight, Valentina Tereshkova, described the horizon as "a light blue, a blue band."
4. a. During the Watergate investigation in the 1970s an important **medium** of information was someone known only as "Deep Throat."
b. Many voters think the **media** should not project winners in a national election before the closing of all voting places.
c. Some people's happy **medium** is gossip.
d. Through the **medium** of a camera lens Marguerite Higgins caught images of war in Korea and Vietnam.